**Jonah and God**

**by Frances Jones**

**CHARACTERS**

                                      Jonah

                                      God (off stage)

                                      Captain of the ship

                                      Sailor 1

                                      Sailor 2

                                      Sailor 3

                                      King of Nineveh

                                      Citizen 1

                                      Citizen 2

                                      Other citizens of Nineveh

**SCENES**

Jonah on the ship and in the whale

Jonah in Nineveh

Jonah at the gate

**PROPS**

Three chairs

Dice

King’s crown

King’s robe

Vine with string to pull it up

**SCENE ONE**

**Stage directions are on the actor’s right and left.**

*(Three chairs are on the stage. They are a little right of center stage. They are 18 inches apart facing the audience. Jonah stomps on stage from the left. He is angry. He turns and looks up.)*

JONAH: *(Yelling)* No, God! No! I will not go to Nineveh!

I will not go there! The people in Nineveh are bad! I will not tell them to change! No! I will not go to Nineveh!

JONAH: *(Stops, still looking up)*I know you are a loving God. If the people of Nineveh repent, you will forgive them. I do not want them to repent! I do not want you to forgive them! Those people are bad!

*(The ship captain walks on stage from the right. He goes to the chairs and looks at them. Jonah goes to him.)*

JONAH: Is this your ship?

CAPTAIN: Yes, it’s my ship. I’m going to Tarshish in Spain.

JONAH: How much to go to Tarshish?

CAPTAIN: One gold coin.

*(Three men walk on stage from the left. They sit sideways on the chairs, facing right.)*

*(Jonah takes a coin from his pocket. He gives it to the captain.)*

CAPTAIN: *(To Jonah)* We are ready to go.

*(Jonah goes to the chairs. He lies down in front of them. He goes to sleep.)*

CAPTAIN: *(To men)*Ready men? Row! Row! Row!

*(The men row as the captain calls.)*

*(Suddenly the men and the captain rock back and forth. They jerk up and down. There is a bad storm.)*

CAPTAIN: A storm! Where did this wind come from? Row, men!

*(The men are struggling to stay in the chairs. The captain is staggering. The men are all yelling at the same time.)*

CAPTAIN: Row! Row!

SAILOR 1: We cannot row! The waves are too big! *(He looks up.)* God of waves, save us! Save us!

SAILOR 2: Save us, God of winds! *(Still trying to row.)*

SAILOR 3: We call, God of storms, help us! Help us!

CAPTAIN: *(Shaking Jonah)* Wake up! Wake up! How can you sleep? Pray for help! Pray to your God for help! Our ship is going down! Who is your God? Pray!

*(Jonah is slow getting up. He begins to rock back and forth in the storm, too.)*

SAILOR 3: Someone on this ship is bad luck. *(He turns to Sailor 2)*Is it you?

SAILOR 2: No.

SAILOR 1: Get the dice.

*(The men throw the dice. They look at Jonah. The storm is still bad. The men rock back and forth.)*

CAPTAIN: *(looking at Jonah)*Who are you? What did you do? Why did you bring this storm on us?

JONAH: My name is Jonah. I am a Jew. I pray to God who made the world.

*(The men are more afraid. They cover their faces with their arms. The storm is still jerking them around.)*

SAILOR 3: Oh, God Who Made The World, save us!

JONAH: It will not help for me to pray. I am running away from God.

SAILORS and CAPTAIN: *(Together)* Why did you do it? Stop the storm! Do something! Stop the storm!

*(The storm is worse. Two of the men fall down. They get up and one of them falls again.)*

JONAH: Throw me into the sea. Then the storm will stop.

*(The three men help Jonah over the back of the chairs. He falls on the floor.)*

CAPTAIN: God Who Made The World, you sent this storm. If Jonah dies, please don’t blame us.

*(The storm stops. The men pick up the chairs and go off the stage right. )*

*(Jonah is in the sea on the floor. He tries to swim but he is rolling over and over. He tries to fight something from off his head. He gets to centre stage, on the floor. He suddenly sits up. He rocks gently.)*

JONAH: Where am I? *(He feels around him, all sides, top and bottom. He feels the edges of a round place. He is rocking gently.)*I am in a fish! I am in a great fish!

JONAH: *(Crying)* Oh, save me, God! I am in a great fish.

JONAH: *(On his knees, rocking gently)* The sea was over me, God. Your storm covered me. I was going to die, and I called to you. I will never pray to any god but you. You saved my life in a fish. I pray to you alone.

*(There is a sound from off stage: AARRGH-ph-t-t-t-t! Jonah tumbles to the left and jumps up. He staggers off stage, left.)*

**CURTAINS CLOSE.**

**SCENE TWO**

*(Several people are on stage. They are citizens of Nineveh. Two people are fighting. Some people are arguing, pushing and shoving. Others are laughing and singing too loud. The king stands in the back. He has a crown on his head and is wearing a good robe.)*

*JONAH*: *(Walking on stage from the left)* *People of Nineveh! You will be destroyed in 40 days!*

*(A few people turn and look at him. Others do not listen.)*

CITIZEN 1: What? Who are you?

CITIZEN 2: He is a crazy Jew man. He says his name is Jonah. He came the day before yesterday. Our city is going to be destroyed, ha. We are the biggest city in the world!

JONAH: The God who made the world sent me. He will destroy you in 40 days. *(He turns to the other people.)*Get ready! God will destroy you in 40 days! He will destroy Nineveh in 40 days!

*(The citizens talk to each other, saying ‘That is what he thinks!’ ‘I don’t believe him.’ And ‘He is just a crazy man.’)*

*(The king walks to Jonah. The people step back and stop talking. They listen as the king talks to Jonah.)*

KING: Why is your God going to destroy our city?

JONAH: Your people fight and kill. They steal. Children are not taken care of. Old people and the lame and the sick are not taken care of. You pray to idols.

KING: *(Walking back and forth, thinking. He turns back to Jonah.)* What can we do? What does your God want?

JONAH: He wants you and your people to change. He wants you to be sorry for what you do.

KING: *(Walking and thinking)* Your God is right. Bad things happen in Nineveh. We do need to change.

KING: *(Turning to the people)*This man from God is right. Bad things do happen here in Nineveh.

*(The people nod to each other. Some of them say ‘Yes, yes!’)*

KING: I say we will be sorry. We will tell the God of Jonah that we are sorry.

CITIZEN 2: *(Coming to the king)* Sir, how can we do that?

KING: *(Taking off his crown)* Tell this to all the city: Do not eat. Do not wear good clothes. Do not let your animals eat. Sit in the dust. This will show that you are sorry. It will show that you have changed.

*(Two persons go off stage, one to the left, one to the right. They yell, off stage, ‘A message from the king! Listen! A message from the king!)*

KING: *(Sitting on the floor)* I will not eat. I take off my good robe. *(He takes it off.)*I sit here in the dust to show that I am sorry. I will pray that God will not destroy us.

**CURTAINS CLOSE**

**SCENE THREE**

*(Jonah is stomping back and forth across the stage. Two chairs are propped against each other, back to back. They are centre stage to the back. They look something like a tent.)*

JONAH: I knew it! I knew it! *(He lifts his fists and looks up.)*Why did you do that, God? I told the people of Nineveh they were going to be destroyed. Did you destroy them? No! You saved them. And you made a fool of me.

*(Jonah sits in front of the chairs. He is angry.)*

CITIZEN 1: *(Walking past)* Good day, Jonah.

*(Jonah gives the man an angry look. He does not answer.)*

JONAH: *(To God)* You want to save everyone, God. You are slow to get angry. I knew if the people in Nineveh said they were sorry, you would not destroy them.

GOD: (*From off stage*) Jonah, is it right to be angry when something good happens?

JONAH: Just kill me, God. I do not want to live. I said Nineveh was going to be destroyed. That didn’t happen. I am nothing in this city.

JONAH: *(Jonah pulls a string tied to the vine. The vine looks as if it is growing over the chairs)*Thank you, vine. Your leaves keep the sun off. And they keep the hot winds off me. Thank you, good vine.

*(Jonah sits and sleeps. The vine falls down. After a minute Jonah wakes up. He raises his arms and yawns.)*

JONAH: The sun is hot today. And this wind is very hot. *(He puts his arms over his head.)* I’m burning in the heat. Where is my vine? *(He looks for the vine.)*

JONAH: *(Picks up the end of the vine)* It’s dead! My good vine is dead. A worm has killed it!

(*Jonah wipes his head and face.*) I am so hot, so hot. I wish I were dead.

GOD: *(From off stage)*Jonah, are you angry that the vine died?

JONAH: Yes, I am angry! That vine was a good vine. It did not deserve to be killed by a worm.

GOD: *(From off stage)* You cared for that vine, but you did not put it there. You did not grow it. It was just a vine that grows and dies.

GOD: *(From off stage)* Tell me, Jonah, can I not care, too? Can I not be sorry for the city of Nineveh? Can I not care for the 120 000 people that live there? Can I not care for their animals?

JONAH: *(His head is down)*I know you made and love all people.

**CURTAINS CLOSE**